

## Message Text

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SUBJECT: DRAFT HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION PLAN FOR BENIN

1. AF BUREAU HAS REVISED FORMAT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS COUNTRY ACTION PLANS AND IS CONCENTRATING ON SEVERAL COUNTRIES POSING HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY PROBLEMS. PURPOSE OF REVISION IS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT OTHER U.S. INTERESTS AND TO BE MORE SPECIFIC WITH REGARD TO TIME FRAME AND TYPE OF ACTIONS CONTEMPLATED. POST COMMENTS ON FOLLOWING DRAFT ARE REQUESTED ASAP. FINAL TEXT WILL BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL AT SENIOR LEVEL AND BECOME BASIS OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIONS REGARDING BENIN.

2. BEGIN TEXT: BENIN - HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION PLAN

I. COUNTRY OVERVIEW  
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BENIN (FORMERLY DAHOMEY) IS A COUNTRY OF SOME THREE MILLION PEOPLE WITH AN ESTIMATED GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT OF DOLS 137 PER CAPITA IN 1976. IT IS ALSO SMALL GEOGRAPHICALLY AND HAS ESSENTIALLY NO SIGNIFICANT NATURAL RESOURCES. MOST OF THE POPULATION SUBSISTS ON AGRICULTURE. SINCE INDEPENDENCE IN 1960 BENIN HAS HAD VERY FREQUENT CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT. THE KEREKOU REGIME, ESTABLISHED AS THE

MILITARY REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT IN OCTOBER 1972, HAS STAYED IN POWER LONGEST OF ANY REGIME AND GIVEN BENIN A

MEASURE OF STABILITY. THE KEREKOU REGIME DECIDED IN 1974 TO TURN AWAY FROM DAHOMEY'S FORMER CLOSE TIES WITH THE WEST AND TO ADOPT "SCIENTIFIC" MARXISM-LENINISM AS ITS POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY. THE COUNTRY'S NAME WAS CHANGED TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN IN 1975. ALTHOUGH BENIN CONTINUES TO ENCOURAGE AND RECEIVE ASSISTANCE FROM FRANCE, THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IS NO LONGER CONSIDERED DEAN OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND THE PRESENT INCUMBENT HAS BEEN DECLARED PERSONA NON GRATA. BENIN HAS STRONGLY SUPPORTED COMMUNIST AND "PROGRESSIVE" COUNTRIES IN INTERNATIONAL FORA. IN JANUARY 1977, A PLANE LOAD OF STILL UNIDENTIFIED MERCENARIES ATTEMPTED TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT BUT FLED AFTER A FEW HOURS OF DESULTORY ATTACK.

IMPLEMENTATION OF MARXISM-LENINISM IN BENIN HAS PROCEEDED SLOWLY. A NEW CONSTITUTION, APPROVED IN SEPTEMBER 1977, INCLUDES MANY INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS, BUT HOW IT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IS UNCLEAR. IN LINE WITH ITS MARXIST-LENINIST PHILOSOPHY THE GOVERNMENT HAS NATIONALIZED MUCH PRIVATE BUSINESS ACTIVITY AND HAS EMPHASIZED CENTRALIZED ECONOMIC PLANNING AND POLITICAL DIRECTION. IN GENERAL THE PRESENT REGIME APPEARS MORE CONSCIENTIOUS ABOUT CARING FOR THE CONFIDENTIAL

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POPULATION THAN PREVIOUS REGIMES. HOWEVER, APPLICATION OF PRICE CONTROLS TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS HAS CAUSED FOOD SHORTAGES. A MIXTURE OF WEATHER PROBLEMS AND IDEOLOGICAL RIGIDITY HAS HAMPERED THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO INCREASE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION.

THE ABOVE ENVIRONMENT HAS CLEARLY SHAPED THE REGIME'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS HUMAN RIGHTS. INDIVIDUAL HUMAN RIGHTS ARE CONSIDERED SECONDARY TO WIDER SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC WELFARE AND TO PROTECTING THE REGIME FROM PERCEIVED SECURITY THREATS. CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES ARE SEEN AS SOMETHING TO BE ENJOYED UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE OFFICIAL POLITICAL PARTY. GREAT EMPHASIS IS PLACED ON THE FULFILLMENT OF VITAL ECONOMIC NEEDS AND CONSCIENTIOUS ADMINISTRATION OF GOVERNMENT. THE GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED ABOUT ITS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE, INCLUDING HUMAN RIGHTS, BECAUSE IT BELIEVES THAT ITS POLICIES ARE WELL MOTIVATED.

## II. MAJOR U.S. INTERESTS

THE UNITED STATES HAS NO MAJOR POLITICAL, STRATEGIC OR ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN BENIN. OUR RELATIONS WITH BENIN HAVE DETERIORATED AS BENIN'S MARXIST-LENINIST ORIENTATION HAS STRENGTHENED. BENIN CONSISTENTLY OPPOSES THE U.S. ON ISSUES OF MAJOR INTEREST TO US IN INTERNATIONAL FORA.

WE HAVE NOT HAD AN AMBASSADOR IN BENIN SINCE FEBRUARY 1976 WHEN OUR AMBASSADOR WAS RECALLED AT HIS REQUEST BECAUSE

BENINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS QUESTIONED HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS BENIN AND ASKED HIM TO SIGN A STATEMENT ON THIS SUBJECT. WE HAVE NO INTENTION OF SENDING A NEW AMBASSADOR FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

OUR PRIMARY INTEREST IN BENIN IS HUMANITARIAN. OUR MODEST ASSISTANCE IS DIRECTED TOWARDS HEALTH AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LIMITED BILATERAL PROGRAMS AND REGIONAL CONFIDENTIAL

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PROGRAMS. THE ONE MAJOR INFRA-STRUCTURE TYPE PROJECT WE ARE INVOLVED IN, THE DOLS 11 MILLION AID FUNDED COTONOU BRIDGE-DAM LOAN, STEMS FROM AN AGREEMENT ARRIVED AT SEVERAL YEARS AGO WHICH ONLY NOW IS BEING IMPLEMENTED. THE REGIONAL ONCHOCERCIASIS (RIVER BLINDNESS) CONTROL PROJECT FOR FY'78 INVOLVES SOME DOLS 845 THOUSAND. A DOLS 4 MILLION RURAL WATER SUPPLY PROJECT IS PLANNED FOR FY'79. LOANS AND GRANTS WHICH AID FUNDS THROUGH THE ENTENTE FUND INCLUDE PROJECTS FOR BUSINESS, LIVESTOCK AND FOOD PRODUCTION WHICH ARE IN VARIOUS STAGES OF IMPLEMENTATION AND WILL PROBABLY INVOLVE DOLS 4 TO 7 MILLION. A MAJOR COMPONENT OF OUR ASSISTANCE TO BENIN HAS BEEN THE PEACE CORPS BUT BECAUSE OF THE REGIME'S ERRATIC SUPPORT FOR THE PROGRAM AND INCREASING SUSPICION OF WESTERNERS THE NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO DECLINE THROUGH NORMAL ATTRITION FROM ABOUT 50 TO ROUGHLY 20, AND THE FUTURE OF THE PROGRAM IS UNCERTAIN.

OUR PRIMARY POLICY GOAL IS TO MODERATE BENIN'S RADICAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE WEST. IN PURSUIT OF THIS GOAL WE ARE:

--EXPLAINING OUR POSITIONS ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES.

--CAUTIOUSLY ATTEMPTING TO LIMIT RESTRICTIONS ON FOREIGN DIPLOMATS WHILE LOOSELY INTERPRETING EXISTING RESTRICTIONS FOR OUR OWN OPERATIONAL PURPOSES.

--SEEKING TO MAINTAIN A CORDIAL WORKING RELATIONSHIP DESPITE A SOMETIMES ERRATIC OR EVEN HOSTILE ATMOSPHERE.

--CONTINUING TO PROMOTE A VERY MODEST INFORMATIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM.  
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--ENCOURAGING BENINESE COOPERATION WITH WEST AFRICAN REGIONAL ECONOMIC ORGANIZATIONS. BENIN HAS SO FAR TAKEN A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS).

--SEEKING WRITTEN ASSURANCES FROM THE REGIME TO PREVENT DETENTION INCIDENTS OR AT LEAST RESOLVE THEM IMMEDIATELY. BECAUSE OF SECURITY MEASURES INSTITUTED FOLLOWING THE JANUARY 1977 MERCENARY ATTACK, BENIN HAS ARRESTED AND DETAINED AMERICAN CITIZENS FOR A SIGNIFICANT PERIOD IN TWO CASES.

--ASSISTING THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES BY ATTEMPTING TO PERSUADE THE BENINESE AUTHORITIES TO NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT FOR PROPERTY EXPROPRIATED IN THE SPRING OF 1976.

OUR PROGRESS IN ATTAINING THE ABOVE GOALS HAS BEEN NEGLIGIBLE. OUR SUCCESS HAS BEEN IN AVOIDING A FURTHER DETERIORATION IN LIMITED RELATIONS.

### III. HUMAN RIGHTS

#### A. OBJECTIVES

INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON - OUR OVERALL OBJECTIVE IS TO ENCOURAGE THE GPRB TO ADHERE TO THE BASIC PRINCIPLES IT HAS ENUNCIATED IN ITS NEW CONSTITUTION AND TO SEE THAT THESE RIGHTS, SPECIFICALLY WITH REGARD TO THE LIBERTY OF THE INDIVIDUAL, ARE RESPECTED. WE LACK RELIABLE INFORMATION ON THE INTEGRITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN BENIN. FOR THE SHORT TERM WE WISH TO BE MORE INFORMED ABOUT THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN BENIN AND THE GPRB TO BE MORE FULLY AWARE OF OUR POLICY. FOR THE MEDIUM TERM WE WANT TO BE ABLE TO ADDRESS SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS RELATING TO INTEGRITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL WITH THE BENINESE GOVERNMENT. CONFIDENTIAL

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MENT AND TO ENCOURAGE A POSITIVE RESPONSE ON THEIR PART. FOR THE LONG TERM WE SEEK THE RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS, AND THE HUMANE TREATMENT OF THOSE LEGALLY INCARCERATED AFTER DUE PROCESS.

RIGHT TO BASIC ECONOMIC NEEDS - OUR OBJECTIVE IS TO ENCOURAGE THE REGIME TO IMPLEMENT MORE EFFECTIVELY ITS GOALS OF PROVIDING FOR ITS PEOPLE AND ULTIMATELY TO IMPROVE THE WELFARE OF THE BENINESE PEOPLE. THIS GOAL WOULD INCLUDE THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT FOR RATIONAL ECONOMIC POLICIES. FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIFIC PROGRAMS THE TIMING AND EXTENT WILL BE LARGELY DETERMINED BY THE ECONOMIC RESOURCES AVAILABLE AND THE CONSTRAINTS IMPOSED BY ECONOMIC POLICY, CORRUPTION AND INEFFICIENCY.

CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES - OUR MAIN OBJECTIVE WOULD BE TO ENCOURAGE THE REGIME TO ADHERE TO THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, THOUGHT, ASSEMBLY AND MOVEMENT PROVISIONS, ETC. SET FORTH IN ITS NEW CONSTITUTION.

B. SCENARIO

THE FOLLOWING SCENARIO IS APPLICABLE TO ALL OBJECTIVES.

1) INSTRUCT EMBASSY TO REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION AS IT AFFECTS HUMAN RIGHTS.

2) INSTRUCT THE EMBASSY TO INSURE THAT ALL ELEMENTS OF THE MISSION CONTRIBUTE TO EMBASSY REPORTING ON HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS.

IF THE ABOVE ACTIONS ARE TAKEN WE WOULD EXPECT TO HAVE SUFFICIENT INFORMATION WITHIN ABOUT SIX MONTHS FOR THE CONFIDENTIAL

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DEPARTMENT TO ASCERTAIN WHICH IF ANY SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES TO PURSUE WITH THE GPRB.

3). DURING THE INITIAL SIX MONTH PERIOD WE WOULD:

A) INSTRUCT THE EMBASSY TO TAKE THE NECESSARY MEASURES TO ASSURE THAT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IS AWARE OF OUR HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS AND TO REPORT REACTIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT.

B) CONTINUE MODEST AID FUNDED BILATERAL AND REGIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TO BENIN IN ACCORDANCE WITH USUAL AID PLANNING PROCEDURES, PROVIDED THAT THEY DIRECTLY BENEFIT THE NEEDY. AT APPROPRIATE POINTS DURING PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW OR ONGOING PROJECTS GPRB OFFICIALS WOULD BE REMINDED OF OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY.

C) SUPPORT ALL IFI LOANS AND GRANTS TO BENIN, IN PARTICULAR THE SCHEDULED IDA 13 MILLION DOLLAR COTONOU PORT IMPROVEMENT LOAN, BUT CONSIDER UTILIZING THE OCCASION OF EACH IFI LOAN TO REMIND APPROPRIATE BENINESE OFFICIALS OF OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY.

4) AFTER THE INITIAL SIX MONTHS PERIOD WE SHOULD PROCEED AS FOLLOWS:

A) ON THE BASIS OF RECENT AND RELIABLE INFORMATION AND A BACKGROUND OF HAVING FULLY INFORMED THE BENINESE OF OUR POLICY WE WOULD INSTRUCT EMBASSY TO APPROACH GPRB FOREIGN MINISTRY REGARDING SPECIFIC INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON AND CIVIL LIBERTIES PROBLEMS.

B) WITH REGARD TO INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON WE WOULD MAKE INQUIRIES ABOUT PERSONS WE ARE REASONABLY CERTAIN HAVE BEEN IMPRISONED WITHOUT TRIAL FOR POLITICAL REASONS IF

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INFORMATION PREVIOUSLY GATHERED WARRANTS SUCH INQUIRIES. WE WOULD ALSO INQUIRE FURTHER REGARDING SUBSTANCE OF SERIOUS ALLEGATIONS GATHERED DURING THE PAST SIX MONTHS ABOUT MISTREATMENT OF PRISONERS.

C) WITH REGARD TO CIVIL LIBERTIES, IF INFORMATION GATHERED IN THE PREVIOUS SIX MONTHS INDICATES THE BENINESE GOVERNMENT IS FLAGRANTLY DISREGARDING THE PROVISIONS OF ITS OWN CONSTITUTION, WE WOULD SEEK AN EXPLANATION OF THEIR INCONSISTENCIES.

D) A POSITIVE RESPONSE WOULD ENCOURAGE US TO PRAISE THE BENINESE AND CONSIDER INCREASED BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO BENIN.

E) A NEGATIVE RESPONSE WOULD CAUSE US TO CONSIDER TAKING THE FOLLOWING GRADUATED MEASURES:

- 1) EXPRESS OUR CONCERN TO THE GPRB.
- 2) RECONSIDER SUPPORT OF IFI INFRASTRUCTURE LOANS.
- 3) SEE TO IT THAT THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS IS AWARE OF ANY HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS IN BENIN.
- 4) REEXAMINE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO BENIN TO INTERPRET MORE STRICTLY THE STIPULATION THAT PROJECTS DIRECTLY BENEFIT THE NEEDY.

C. IMPACT ON OTHER POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

TO THE EXTENT THAT WE MAY HAVE TO CUT INTO ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OBJECTIVES WITH REGARD TO CONFIDENTIAL

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INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON AND CIVIL LIBERTIES, WE WORK AGAINST OUR OBJECTIVES WITH REGARD TO THE RIGHT TO BASIC ECONOMIC NEEDS. WE ALSO LIMIT THE AVAILABLE LEVERAGE FOR OTHER OBJECTIVES SUCH AS EXPROPRIATION CLAIMS, THE BENINESE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE WEST, WELFARE OF U.S. CITIZENS, AND RESTRICTIONS ON DIPLOMATS.

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